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Preventive diplomacy: Delivering results

Report of the Secretary-General

This report is dedicated to the memory of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld as we mark this year the fiftieth anniversary of his death in 1961.

*I believe we have only begun to explore the full potentialities of the United Nations as an instrument for multilateral diplomacy, especially the most useful combinations of public discussion on the one hand and private negotiations and mediation on the other.**

Summary

The present report examines the opportunities and the challenges the United Nations and its partners currently face in conducting preventive diplomacy in a changing political and security landscape.

Focusing specifically on diplomatic action taken to prevent or mitigate the spread of armed conflict, the report describes the relevance of preventive diplomacy across the conflict spectrum and as part of broader, nationally owned strategies to promote peace. It highlights the growing expectations placed on the United Nations system and other organizations in the area of conflict prevention and stresses the central importance of partnerships to this end.

The report illustrates how recent preventive diplomacy engagements have made a difference on the ground in a range of different contexts. It discusses the risks and obstacles that continue to hamper preventive efforts and identifies key elements which, in the experience of the United Nations and its partners, have proven critical in maximizing the success of these efforts: early warning, flexibility, partnerships, sustainability, evaluation and resources. The report concludes with recommendations to further strengthen international capacity for preventive diplomacy over the next five years.

* Extract from an address by former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld to the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 11 September 1954.

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I. Introduction

1. Preventive diplomacy has been an enduring idea at the United Nations for many decades. Since Dag Hammarskjöld first articulated the concept over half a century ago, it has continued to evolve in response to new challenges. An integral part of broader conflict prevention efforts, preventive diplomacy refers specifically to diplomatic action taken, at the earliest possible stage, "to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur".[1] Preventive diplomacy remains highly relevant along the entire conflict spectrum.

2. When I took office over four years ago, I made it a priority to re-energize the Organization's preventive diplomacy and to improve our machinery and expand our partnerships to that effect. My efforts were encouraged by Member States, which are themselves placing greater emphasis on conflict prevention and see a key role for the Organization in supporting and complementing their endeavours. There are several reasons for this renewed interest. Foremost is the recurring and devastating impact of armed conflict on individuals, societies and economies, coupled with the recognition — all the more acute in these strained financial times — that failure to prevent conflict is extremely costly. Moreover, although quiet successes rarely make the news, a number of recent engagements have reconfirmed that through a combination of analysis, early warning, rapid response and partnerships, we can help to defuse tensions in escalating crises and assist parties in resolving disputes peacefully.

3. Reflecting this support, the Security Council, under the presidency of Nigeria, held an open debate on preventive diplomacy in Africa on 16 July 2010. In the ensuing presidential statement (S/PRST/2010/14), I was requested to submit a report with recommendations on how best to optimize the use of preventive diplomacy tools within the United Nations system and in cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and other actors. The present report is prepared pursuant to that request.

II. The changing landscape

4. Preventive diplomacy today is being conducted by a broader array of actors, using a wider range of tools, than ever before. This is due in part to the emergence of stronger normative frameworks in favour of international efforts to prevent violent conflict and mass atrocities and to ensure the inclusion of more voices in governance, peace and security. The 2005 World Summit was a watershed moment, when Member States committed to building a "culture of prevention", strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to that end and taking "effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace". Earlier, in its resolution 1325 (2000) the Security Council significantly called for greater participation of women in conflict prevention and recognized the importance of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms.

[1] See "An agenda for peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping" (A/47/277-S/24111), 17 June 1992.

5. Normative developments at the global level were underpinned by those at the regional level in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. On the African continent, most notably, the doctrine of non-interference has been replaced by the African Union's principle of "non-indifference" to imminent threats to peace, security and populations, including unconstitutional changes of government. A number of subregional organizations in Africa either anticipated or followed the new stance. In the Americas, the Organization of American States (OAS) has made the resolution of differences that may lead to crises a priority. New groupings, such as the Union of South American Nations, have become active regional players, including in preventive diplomacy.[2] Other examples include the Pacific region, where the Biketawa Declaration of the Pacific Island Forum (2000) provided a framework for early diplomatic response to emerging security concerns. The 2001 Inter-American Democratic Charter, the 2005 Charter of the Francophonie, the 2007 Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the 2008 Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference[3] (OIC) are all reflective of a growing expectation that emerging crises should be addressed in a timely manner by the appropriate regional or international forums. As a result, we have witnessed, to varying degrees, a shift to more proactive preventive diplomacy in different regions of the world.

6. To give life to these normative innovations, the past decade has also seen the creation of new preventive capacities across the international community, in international and regional organizations and in many Member States. These include the development of early warning systems[4] and targeted funding mechanisms for rapid response,[5] the establishment of dedicated prevention structures[6] and the ongoing use of special envoys. The Mediation Support Unit established at the United Nations in 2006 has become a service provider to both United Nations and non-United Nations mediation efforts, and an increasing number of regional organizations are seeking to enhance their own mediation capacities.[7] Political missions are increasingly being used; in 2010, the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and OAS deployed almost 50 such missions in the field, many with a preventive diplomacy

[2] Declaration of the Council of Heads of State and Government of the Union of South American Nations, Buenos Aires, 4 May 2010, para. 5.

[3] In June 2011, the name of the Organization was changed to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

[4] For example, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the African Union and a number of African subregional organizations have developed early warning systems.

[5] Examples include the European Union's Instrument for Stability, the flexible financing mechanism for rapid response set up by the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the Immediate Response Facility of the Peacebuilding Fund.

[6] For example, the Member State-supported strengthening, in 2008, of the Department of Political Affairs, the Panel of the Wise of the African Union, the Council of the Wise of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), new structures of the European External Action Service of the European Union, such as the Directorate for Conflict Prevention and Security Policy and, within that, the Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention and Mediation Unit.

[7] For example, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations have concluded a joint mediation partnership, which includes the funding of a mediation fellow to be based at OAS; joint mediation training for Member State officials; and support to the development of an OAS expert roster, after-action review methodologies and gender strategy.

and good offices mandate.[8] The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities has helped to defuse tensions over national minority issues in many countries through quiet diplomacy.

7. Despite serious challenges that continue to hamper preventive diplomacy efforts, which will be discussed later in this report, there are growing indications that our collective efforts at prevention are responding better to the needs on the ground. The number of low-intensity conflicts that started in the period from 2000 to 2009 is only roughly half as high as those that started in the 1990s. In the same period, the number of new high-intensity conflicts (onsets and escalations) also dropped, from 21 to 16.[9] While a number of factors explain this decline, more and better preventive action by Member States and international organizations is an important part of the story.

III. Making a difference on the ground

8. In the face of political tensions or escalating crises, preventive diplomacy is often one of the few options available, short of coercive measures, to preserve peace. It is also potentially a high-return investment. The biggest return comes in lives saved. However, prevention also makes strong economic sense. The World Bank has calculated that "the average cost of civil war is equivalent to more than 30 years of gross domestic product (GDP) growth for a medium-size developing country".[10] The most severe civil wars impose cumulative costs of tens of billions of dollars, and recovery to original growth paths takes the society concerned an average of 14 years.[10] By contrast, prevention efforts can be much less costly: the United Nations Office for West Africa, which has played an important role in prevention efforts in Guinea, the Niger and elsewhere in the subregion, has a regular budget of less than $8 million per year.

9. The following section seeks to highlight ways in which the United Nations is using its existing instruments, honing new ones and working with key actors in new and creative partnerships to make a difference on the ground through diplomacy.

A. Key actors, tools and instruments

General Assembly

10. Pursuant to Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly has broad authority to consider conflict prevention in all its aspects; develop recommendations as appropriate; or call the attention of the Security Council to situations that are likely to endanger international peace and security.

[8] See Richard Gowan, ed., *Review of Political Missions 2010* (Center on International Cooperation, 2010).

[9] Uppsala Conflict Data Program/Peace Research Institute Oslo Armed Conflict Dataset, version 4-2010, 1946-2009 available from http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/19/19228_UCDP_PRIO_ArmedConflictDataset_V4_2010.xls.

[10] See World Bank, *2011 World Development Report: Conflict, Security and Development* (Washington, D.C., 2011).

11. Through its norm-setting capacity and deliberative functions, the General Assembly has a central role in contributing to a conducive environment for conflict prevention. Its adoption, on 22 June 2011, of a consensus resolution aimed at strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention and resolution (resolution 65/283) is a groundbreaking development that positions the Organization as a setter of standards for mediation and provides a broad framework for productive collaboration with Member States, regional organizations and other mediation actors. As the Organization's supreme budgetary authority, the General Assembly also reviews and approves the budgets of political missions and other instruments relating to conflict prevention and peacemaking. In 2008, it made possible the strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, with a view to bolstering the Organization's preventive capacity. Furthermore, at the request of the Assembly, I am submitting to its sixty-sixth session a report containing recommendations on improved funding and backstopping of our special political missions, with the aim of ensuring more flexible and rapid deployment of this increasingly mandated instrument.

Security Council

12. As the United Nations organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council has a key role to play in the prevention of armed conflict. In the past, the Council focused largely on dealing with conflicts and emergencies after they occurred, but recent years have seen a push for greater engagement and flexibility in addressing emerging threats before they are placed on the Council's formal agenda. For example, since early 2008, the Council has held "informal interactive dialogues" on a range of situations, which are intended to promote a more proactive approach to preventive diplomacy. It has requested the Department of Political Affairs to deliver monthly "horizon scanning" briefings that focus on current and emerging conflicts. I also use our informal monthly luncheons with the Security Council to raise many items that are not on any formal agenda. Since 2007, the thematic item "peace and security in Africa" has served to address a variety of country-specific issues in formal meetings, including situations not officially on the Council's agenda, such as, in the early stages, Libya.

13. How, and how early, the Security Council should become involved in a situation of concern is a question that must be answered on a case-by-case basis. At times, the Council decides to keep its clout in reserve, in order to leave space for quiet diplomacy and the good offices of the Secretary-General. In other instances, highly visible and decisive action by the Council, such as missions to the field, initiatives by its President and press communiqués, has opened political space for prevention which otherwise would not have existed, strongly supporting my efforts.

14. When the Security Council forms a common vision for addressing a situation of concern, as it did in the case of Guinea's constitutional crisis in 2009 and 2010 and the Southern Sudan 2011 independence referendum, it has proven its effectiveness in generating political momentum and engaging with key interlocutors in pursuit of a common strategy. The Council has begun to develop stronger and more structured relationships with regional organizations to that effect. Council support for mediation initiatives, whether undertaken by the United Nations or regional actors, has also proven crucial. At later stages of a conflict, more coercive tools such as targeted sanctions have added critical leverage to diplomatic efforts. The Security Council also plays a unique role in preventing the escalation of

conflict or a slide back into war by establishing political and peacekeeping missions with appropriate mandates.

Peacebuilding Commission

15. The Peacebuilding Commission, which is an intergovernmental advisory body of the Security Council and the General Assembly, ensures sustained international attention to countries emerging from conflict, including to the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict. Six countries are currently on the Commission's agenda: Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Country-specific configurations of the Commission have been established in each case, which could help to prevent relapse into violence through representation efforts by their Chairs and my Special Representatives.

Good offices of the Secretary-General

16. My mandate for conflict prevention originates in Article 99 of the Charter, which provides that the Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which, in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. Successive Secretaries-General have used their good offices to help parties find solutions to problems at the earliest possible stage. The effectiveness of the good offices is often a function of how much political space the Secretary-General has in which to act. In my own experience, the most difficult scenario is when international interest is strong but conflicted, because the parties know that there is no unity of vision. As a custodian of the Charter, I also have the duty to speak out in certain situations, an obligation which may or may not enhance mediation efforts. At times, public advocacy in full view of the media is necessary; more often, however, good offices are deployed behind the scenes. Irrespective of the approach, the key is to practise diplomacy that is as determined as it is flexible.

17. The Department of Political Affairs serves as the main operational arm for the conduct of my good offices. With regular and extrabudgetary support from the Member States,[11] the Department was strengthened over the past three years to play its lead role in preventive diplomacy within the United Nations system more effectively. It has enhanced its analytical capacities, its technical expertise in key areas such as electoral assistance, its partnerships and its ability to learn lessons, distil best practices and facilitate system-wide responses. As a result, it is becoming better geared towards rapid response and, through its reinforced regional divisions and Mediation Support Unit, can assist good offices and mediation initiatives worldwide, whether undertaken by the Organization or its partners. Its standby team of mediation experts is able to deploy within 72 hours to assist negotiators on peace process design, security arrangements, constitution-making, gender, power-sharing and wealth-sharing. A dedicated mechanism, supported by voluntary contributions, provides more flexible financing for rapid response.

[11] Regular budget strengthening was approved in General Assembly resolution 63/261, and I elaborated on that strengthening in A/65/161. With only half of the requested posts approved by the General Assembly, and with increasing Member State demands for Department of Political Affairs core capacities, the Department recently received increased extrabudgetary support. See http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/annualreport_13052011.

Envoys

18. Over the past few years, I have appointed envoys to help to defuse tensions and resolve problems in the context of border disputes, territorial questions, regional conflicts, constitutional and electoral crises, reunification negotiations, peace talks and a range of other issues. My special advisers on the prevention of genocide, the responsibility to protect and other important cross-cutting concerns bring specific thematic expertise to the table. In many cases, United Nations envoys have played a key role in pulling a country or region back from the brink of conflict.

19. For example, in the autumn of 2008, I appointed former Nigerian President, General Olusegun Obasanjo, as Special Envoy for the Great Lakes in the context of growing tension and a widespread fear that the Democratic Republic of the Congo would again become the theatre of regional war. With backstopping from Headquarters and in close consultation with the United Nations peacekeeping operation on the ground, the Special Envoy engaged in intense shuttle diplomacy in search of a negotiated peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Collaborating with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, these efforts resulted, within just a few weeks, in complex peace talks under United Nations auspices, made possible through the rapid deployment of a mediation support team, together with associated logistics, translation services and conference and travel support. By March 2009, the talks had led to a set of agreements foreseeing the demobilization and disarmament of rebel groups and measures to address their underlying grievances. With ongoing engagement by the Special Envoy to monitor progress, the bulk of the commitments were implemented within less than a year. In late 2009, Presidents Kagame and Kabila met for the first time in many years, and shortly thereafter Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo resumed formal diplomatic relations. While the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains serious in terms of generalized insecurity and humanitarian suffering, renewed regional war was averted.

20. In other instances, the Organization has played a supportive role. In January 2008, for example, amid post-election violence in Kenya, the African Union mandated a process chaired by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to avert further deterioration into a civil war along ethnic lines. This effort was strongly supported by the United Nations country team on the ground and staff secondments from the Department of Political Affairs, drawing strategically on expert advice from the Department's Electoral Assistance Division and other actors. The power-sharing agreement reached not only served to avert conflict but also provided the basis for a new constitution. Similarly, in Madagascar, a United Nations mediation support team has been deployed to assist the mediation efforts of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) aimed at resolving the political crisis in the country and restoring constitutional order.

21. Many of the instruments we are developing to increase the impact of preventive diplomacy, such as rapidly deployable funding and technical expertise, are also benefiting envoys who are working to resolve current conflicts. One example is Libya, where my Special Envoy is working to arrive at a political resolution of the conflict in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011) and to prevent further humanitarian suffering. Other envoys are engaged in long-term political processes which the United Nations has a special responsibility to facilitate, such as those in Cyprus and Western Sahara. In some

instances, the very existence of a process has intrinsic preventive value, as it can serve as a valve to release tensions, build confidence and ensure that the parties continue to talk to each other.

Regional offices

22. A critical innovation in recent years is the establishment of the United Nations regional offices which serve, inter alia, as forward platforms for preventive diplomacy in West Africa, Central Asia and, since March 2011, Central Africa. The former two have already forged sustained, innovative working relationships with local, regional and other actors to address a broad range of potentially explosive issues throughout their subregions.

23. In 2010, for example, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia was able to provide immediate good offices and support for crisis response in Kyrgyzstan, following the ouster of the former President in April and the outbreak of inter-ethnic violence in June. Working closely with national actors, the United Nations country team, OSCE, the European Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Centre facilitated assistance for reconstruction, recovery and elections in the country, while fostering a dialogue between political leaders and civil society representatives and helping to lay the groundwork for reconciliation.

24. In Guinea, the United Nations Office for West Africa partnered with ECOWAS, the African Union, the International Contact Group and others in facilitating the country's transition from military to constitutional rule throughout 2009 and 2010. Preventing political tensions from escalating into full-blown conflict was a major preoccupation during that period, not least because of the potential destabilization of neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Through steady support to the political process and to the ECOWAS-led mediation, the United Nations assisted Guineans in steering the transition to its completion through the inauguration, in December 2010, of Alpha Condé, Guinea's first President elected through democratic multiparty elections.

25. The mandate of the new United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa is to make a similar contribution to preventing conflict in the subregion and to help to address such cross-border challenges as arms trafficking, organized crime and the presence of armed groups, including the Lord's Resistance Army.

Resident political missions

26. The critical importance of peacekeeping operations in the Organization's overall peace and security toolkit has been recognized for decades. Less well-known is the role played by its much smaller political missions, which are increasingly relied upon to deliver on a range of complex peacemaking and peacebuilding mandates.

27. Political missions vary widely in terms of their purpose, activities, size and scope. They include the regional offices described above, a new liaison office to the African Union, sizeable operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and a number of much

lighter peacemaking and peacebuilding offices.[12] Most are deployed in crisis management mode rather than for a purely preventive objective. However, all accompany complex political or peace consolidation processes, and their mandates tend to include a good offices role, typically carried out by the head of mission.

28. Working with host or partner Governments and other actors, these missions routinely assist with national initiatives to foster dialogue, build capacity, ease tension and prevent violence. The steady political accompaniment they provide and their success in addressing problems before they escalate have been significant albeit often low-profile. The role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq in facilitating dialogue over the city of Kirkuk and other disputed internal territories and in smoothing the path to elections in 2009 and 2010 shows the value of civilian assistance missions working the political track alongside military operations deployed by other actors. The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process has been working continuously to promote calm and alleviate tensions in the region. In Sierra Leone, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office helped to prevent the potential escalation of violence following tensions between the governing and opposition parties in March 2009. From Afghanistan and Nepal to the Middle East, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Somalia, United Nations political missions have worked in recent years to support dialogue among key actors and to shore up political and peace processes. In nearly every case, more integrated approaches and structures in these missions have allowed the Organization to embed conflict prevention in longer-term peacebuilding strategies, enhancing the prospects of a more durable peace.

Peacekeeping operations

29. Given that, as recent World Bank findings show, 90 per cent of civil wars in the past decade took place in countries that had already experienced a civil war in the previous 30 years,[10] all United Nations missions serve as an important first line of crisis response and represent assets for preventive diplomacy across the conflict spectrum. Multidimensional peacekeeping operations have been playing this role for many years — strengthened, as needed, by the parallel role of a special envoy. The Southern Sudan self-determination referendum in January 2011 presents a recent example of how a peacekeeping mission can help to steer complex peace processes through delicate transitions.

30. In the year running up to the referendum, the mission leadership, working closely alongside the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on the Sudan, mediated between the central Sudanese Government and the Government of Southern Sudan, breaking deadlocks at key moments. My Special Representative also helped to align the international community to exercise its influence and

[12] The United Nations resident political missions include the following: Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon; Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Cyprus; United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI); United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA); United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL); United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS); United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA); United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB); United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS); United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions; and United Nations support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission.

assisted the African Union Panel in facilitating negotiations on post-referendum arrangements. Complementing the efforts of the mission and significant technical and logistical electoral assistance, I also deployed a Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan, headed by the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania Benjamin Mkapa, at the request of the parties. My Panel and its staff monitored the pre-referendum atmosphere, provided high-level good offices and built confidence among the parties. In January 2011, 3 million people across the Sudan and abroad went to the poll in a largely peaceful atmosphere, voting overwhelmingly for secession. While the situation in the region remains fragile with key challenges ahead, the absence of major violence around the referendum itself and the widespread acceptance of its outcome were viewed as a success for preventive diplomacy.

Groups of friends and other diplomatic support

31. Coordination of international efforts is indispensable and is often carried out by contact groups and "groups of friends". Such groups have played an important role in, for example, Guinea, Libya, Mauritania and Western Sahara. When they are united, these formations can act as a multiplier of diplomatic efforts, bringing collective influence, resources and expertise to bear. They can further provide a constituency for the envoy, help to uphold key demands and principles, and ensure that the international community speaks with one voice, stays focused and aligns aid behind strategy.

Fact-finding, inquiries and investigations

32. Member States faced with situations of politically sensitive crimes, violent incidents or alleged grave human rights violations have increasingly turned to the Organization to conduct impartial inquiries. Some of these have been mandated by the Security Council or by the Human Rights Council, while others have been established by the Secretary-General. The entities created are as diverse as the situations and requests they respond to. Though not part of the traditional conflict prevention toolkit, these mechanisms have, in recent years, been effectively leveraged to support preventive diplomacy efforts, helping to shift the calculations of the parties, defuse tensions and build confidence. For instance, a joint fact-finding inquiry carried out with ECOWAS into the deaths of Ghanaian migrants found in the Gambia in 2007 was seen as helpful in rebuilding relations between the two countries. Other examples include the United Nations-backed International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, created in 2007 to help the country to investigate and dismantle clandestine criminal networks; the Commission of Inquiry to investigate the events of 28 September 2009 in Conakry; and the Panel of Inquiry on the Gaza flotilla incident of 31 May 2010.

United Nations country teams

33. When political tensions arise in countries where the United Nations has neither an envoy nor a mission, resident coordinators and country teams are frequently propelled to the forefront of facilitating a response and assisting national actors in addressing emerging challenges. In recognition of this reality, we have worked to improve both the immediate assistance the United Nations can provide to our teams on the ground in such situations and the services we can offer to the country concerned. In recent years, such services have included assistance to locally led

mediation efforts and technical expertise on electoral processes, constitutional reforms, truth commissions, national dialogues, reconciliation talks and the creation of national dispute resolution mechanisms. Characteristically, this kind of support is provided discreetly, with minimal resources and as a complement to ongoing development and governance programmes.

34. For example, in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere in the region, resident coordinators and country teams, with enhanced support from Headquarters, played an important role in facilitating the Organization's response to the Arab Spring by supporting dialogue initiatives, fostering processes to share comparative experiences of transitions or offering focused technical advice. In the context of the political crisis in Honduras, a strengthened Resident Coordinator's office provided expertise on a broad range of issues related to the national reconciliation process initiated by the Government of President Porfirio Lobo in January 2010. In order to defuse political tensions in the Comoros, the Resident Coordinator co-chaired, with the President of the National Electoral Commission, a monitoring and transparency committee that brought together political parties, civil society and the international community in the run-up to the Presidential elections in 2010. In Fiji, the United Nations supported, through its team on the ground, efforts to maintain a conversation between the military Government, civil society and other stakeholders in a round-table process focusing on peace and development.

B. New areas of focus

35. In recent years, the United Nations has increasingly been asked to act in preventive diplomacy mode in the context of such severe constitutional crises as unconstitutional changes of government and violent electoral disputes.

Response to unconstitutional changes of government

36. Coups d'état and coup attempts run counter to democratic norms and the rule of law and have a potentially detrimental effect on governance and human rights. In addition, they frequently serve as a trigger of violent conflict, having set off, according to one count, roughly two dozen civil wars since 1945.[13] In this context, the Organization has become increasingly active in helping countries to return to constitutional order. Over the past three years, we have deployed senior envoys to facilitate or mediate, in partnership with regional or subregional organizations, the resolution of crises in the aftermath of military coups and revolts in Guinea, Madagascar, Mauritania and the Niger. With the exception of Madagascar, where the crisis remains unresolved, these facilitation efforts, empowered by increasingly strong regional frameworks against unconstitutional changes of government, have been critical in paving the way to a return to constitutional order.

37. In the cases of Guinea, Mauritania and the Niger, my Dakar-based Special Representative shuttled among the actors, making the case to the de facto authorities for a return to constitutionality, ensuring coordination of the international community and offering advice to the lead regional organization. In Madagascar, the United Nations made significant substantive and technical contributions to the

[13] James D. Fearon, "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer than Others?", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 41, No. 3.

Maputo and Addis Ababa agreements, unfortunately as yet unimplemented. In all cases, mediation and preventive diplomacy efforts drew heavily on the Organization's technical expertise in power-sharing and constitutional and electoral questions.

Election-related violence prevention

38. The majority of elections held around the world are positive expressions of the right of peoples to freely choose their leaders. In fragile situations, they have the potential to unify and to consolidate peace. However, in certain circumstances, elections also have the potential to divide and destabilize, as recently observed in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Zimbabwe. This risk is particularly high in countries with systemic, long-standing and unresolved grievances, combined with a "winner takes all" approach to competitive politics. As domestic and international scrutiny grows and the flow of information increases, the potential for elections to be contested may increase, which could further heighten the possibility of election-related violent conflict. Consequently, the United Nations is working with partners, including regional organizations, to develop a broader approach to preventing election-related violence that combines mediation, good offices and electoral assistance expertise.

39. This approach seeks to offer support in addressing underlying grievances, even in a limited way, by, for example, encouraging the design of political institutions to prevent the monopoly of power. It also encourages inclusive election processes; the establishment of election management bodies that enjoy broad trust and confidence; adequate measures to enfranchise all eligible voters; transparency in all phases of the process; and a fair, expeditious and accessible dispute resolution mechanism.

40. In Sierra Leone, for example, the Organization is working closely with all stakeholders to create the best possible technical and political environment for the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections, which are seen as a pivotal step in sustaining the peacebuilding process in the country. In addition, we have deployed a number of election-related good offices missions in recent years, which helped to increase confidence in the election processes while seeking to mitigate the risk of violence. Such missions were deployed in, for example, Guinea, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, the Niger and Papua New Guinea (Bougainville). I have mentioned already our efforts with regard to the Sudan referendum.

IV. Key challenges and elements for success

41. While preventive diplomacy has grown and evolved significantly, it is neither easy nor straightforward nor inevitably successful. It continues to face great obstacles and long odds, with success often hostage to multiple factors, one of the most critical of which is the will of the parties. If the parties do not want peace or are unwilling to compromise, it is extraordinarily difficult, especially for outsiders, to persuade them otherwise. In such cases, the linkage between preventive diplomacy and the power to produce incentives and disincentives can be critical to convince key actors, with due respect for their sovereignty, that there is value in choosing dialogue over violence and, if necessary, to accept external assistance to that end.

42. In situations of internal crisis in particular, there may be concerns about undue interference or unwanted "internationalization" of a country's internal affairs. A lack of openings for engagement can tie the international community's hands while the human cost climbs in a visibly deteriorating situation — at which point, ironically, the space for political action sometimes opens up. In the face of a particularly grave or imminent threat to international peace and security, diplomacy alone may not be effective and may need to be complemented by other forms of leverage including, if necessary, coercive measures under Chapter VII of the Charter.

43. Nevertheless, despite the myriad challenges, steps can be taken to maximize diplomacy's chances of success. Key elements which, in the experience of the United Nations and many of our partners, have proven essential in that respect are described below.

A. Early warning

44. Although early warning has expanded and improved, its context has changed over the past decade. Only a few years ago, information on brewing situations around the globe was scant; the challenge was to obtain more of it. Today, the challenge is, in some ways, the reverse: information is voluminous and must be sifted, evaluated and integrated. However, predicting crises remains an uncertain business, and the international community is still, on occasion, taken by surprise, as it was by the ethnically targeted violence that ripped through southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 and the timing of the wave of popular unrest that has shaken the Middle East and North Africa in 2011.

45. Cooperation within the United Nations on early warning has improved. Specialized parts of the system such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Office of the Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities are playing a key role in filtering information and drawing attention to such dangerous indicators as patterns of human rights violations or hate speech, which might otherwise escape detection. Similarly, closer cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations such as the African Union and ECOWAS, both of which operate early warning systems, has ensured more and better data. However, the extent to which we pool our analysis of these data still varies. Above all, there is a need for us to better anticipate those "threshold moments" when parties to a conflict decide, or feel compelled, to use or escalate violence to achieve their aims. The more we understand the motives and calculations of key actors, the better we will be able to tailor a preventive response.

46. Our analysis of any situation improves with proximity, local knowledge and regular contact with a multitude of actors. In addition to its partners in regional and subregional organizations, the United Nations has begun to work more closely with civil society, parliaments, the business community, influential academic institutions and think tanks on the ground. Women's groups in particular play an important role in early warning. We must continue to expand these critical networks, which have significantly increased our analytical capacities.

47. No matter how accurate the early warning, the real test is whether it leads to early action. The difference between a successful engagement and one that is likely to fail can often be measured in the time lapsed between the first warning signs of a

problem and the first steps taken to address it. This "warning-to-action continuum" is the challenge the international community can find hardest to meet, for a variety of reasons, as described in this report. However, even if the actions taken are small, for example a statement of concern by the Security Council, the deployment of a fact-finding mission or a well-timed démarche by the Secretary-General, these can have a more important effect on the calculations of key actors than a larger but more slowly developed response. This is true especially when these actions clearly signal a sustained focus by the international community.

B. Flexibility

48. Conflicts are by nature dynamic and unpredictable. Intra-State wars, for example start and stop frequently. They can suddenly both deepen and widen. Every intervention to prevent, transform, manage or resolve conflict must therefore be flexible, configured to the needs on the ground and not according to our institutional set-ups. This holds particularly true for preventive diplomacy, precisely because much of its value lies in its adaptability.

49. Different regions, societies and groups tend to prefer different preventive diplomacy approaches. Indirect talks (between third parties and one party to a dispute) appear to be the preferred model in some regions, while direct talks (between parties to a dispute) are significantly more common in others.[14] In some regions, independent actors not affiliated with larger institutions will have comparative advantages that others do not. Whatever the approach chosen, and whoever carries it out, our engagements are more likely to succeed if they take into account local preferences and remain flexible, while pursuing clear objectives.

50. We work in a highly fluid geopolitical landscape and must also show flexibility in adapting our tools to address changing patterns of violence. Countries stricken by armed conflict today often see a concomitant rise in transnational organized crime, in particular trafficking in people, drugs and looted resources. This often complicates efforts to end conflict and fuels high levels of violence even in the post-conflict phase. Our existing preventive diplomacy tools could help to address these challenges by reinforcing a series of regional and global efforts to curb transnational organized crime and by feeding into a long-term effort to help fragile countries to strengthen the rule of law.

C. Partnerships

51. Regional and subregional organizations have a unique influence on, leverage over, and access to crisis situations in their region. The framers of the Charter of the United Nations were visionaries in foreseeing a global collective security architecture with a clear role for regional arrangements. In the richly complex landscape we face today, the United Nations is working increasingly in tandem with regional actors in a variety of ways: in a lead role, in a supporting role, in a burden-sharing role, in sequential deployments and in several joint operations.

[14] See the data set entitled "Managing low-intensity intra-State conflict" of the Department of Peace and Conflict Research of Uppsala University, Sweden, which covers 122 such conflicts during the period from 1993 to 2004.

52. In the past five years, we have deepened existing or established new conflict prevention and mediation partnerships with the African Union, the European Union, OSCE, OAS, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), ECOWAS, SADC, ASEAN, OIC and others. Partly through the use of extrabudgetary resources, we have been able to undertake initiatives to help to build regional capacities and learn from regional experiences. Joint training programmes on a broad range of peace and security issues are now available. Still, synergies take time and hard work to attain and are not rendered easier by the fact that, with very few exceptions,[15] the United Nations, regional organizations and other actors have no shared mechanism or procedure to decide, in real time, who should do what in a given case. As we work to improve our formal institutional channels and protocols in that regard, we are also investing in key personal relationships with regional partners, which form the bedrock of closer cooperation.

53. Meanwhile, our cooperation with the World Bank and other international financial institutions in fragile and conflict-affected States has grown over the past few years, and we have seen real benefits when the leverage of these institutions, based on the unique incentives only they can offer, is lined up behind a common diplomatic effort. We welcome the publication by the World Bank of the *2011 World Development Report: Conflict, Security and Development* as an important contribution to our combined efforts to address these critical linkages.

54. The role of independent mediators is increasingly important, and we have begun to forge closer links with some of these. We have also reached out to other actors in the field of preventive diplomacy, such as elders' groups, civil society organizations, women's groups, think tanks, academia, the media and the business community. A necessary shift is under way to improve the way we work with civil society, especially women and young people, who are often marginalized and yet can lead the charge for peaceful change.

55. Lastly, we are working to improve partnerships within the United Nations system itself, integrating our numerous, though often disparate, tools to maximize the impact of our preventive efforts. The recent engagement in Guinea, for example, required the involvement of the Security Council, my personal intervention and over 40 working visits to Conakry by my Special Representative in Dakar. It also required effective leadership and backstopping from the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Office for West Africa, the active contribution of the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations country team, a United Nations-led Commission of Inquiry and the opening of a new OHCHR office, as well as the assistance of political analysts, electoral experts and mediation advisers alongside development, humanitarian, human rights and security sector specialists. Critical contributions were also made by our Peacebuilding Fund, which supported both the ECOWAS mediation and a dedicated security force to safeguard the electoral process. At one key juncture, a United Nations helicopter on loan from our Liberia mission ensured the transport of time-sensitive electoral materials from remote areas to Conakry.

[15] The United Nations and the African Union recently finalized joint guidelines for mediation partnerships.

D. Sustainability

56. Preventive diplomacy typically engages official decision makers during periods of rising political tensions or emerging crises. Once the impasse is resolved or the critical moment has passed, preventive diplomacy efforts tend to scale back down, leaving the question of how diplomatic gains can be sustained. In the context of post-conflict mediation, much importance has been ascribed in recent years to the durability of peace agreements. Although preventive diplomacy engagements do not necessarily lead to formal agreements, the most successful ones have assisted national counterparts in laying the foundations for a longer-term process to address underlying causes of conflict, as the Annan mediation did in Kenya in 2008. Key in this regard are locally designed and owned institutions that can prevent conflict through championing dialogue and providing a forum for the peaceful resolution of disputes. In a number of contexts, these have become known as "national infrastructures for peace".

57. In parallel with building national resources for conflict prevention, quiet international or regional facilitation must remain available longer than has generally been the case to date, in the event that it is needed at specific junctures.[10] The Peacebuilding Commission as well as our regional offices, in-country political missions, and country teams have an important role to play in this regard.

58. In order to be durable, preventive diplomacy engagements must also be broadened from the circle of decision makers and senior officials to civil society at large. However, working with civil society leaders towards lasting solutions frequently exceeds the terms of reference — and capacity — of an envoy whose main focus is Track I preventive diplomacy. Ideally, therefore, envoys and their teams should develop joint strategies and a division of labour with United Nations and other actors on the ground who are engaged in longer-term peacebuilding efforts. Non-governmental organizations that specialize in supporting Track II and "people-to-people" Track III diplomacy can also be valuable interlocutors in such contexts.

E. Evaluation

59. We know when preventive diplomacy is effective, but proving this empirically is difficult. Our existing assessment frameworks are not well-suited to the complex realities we find on the ground, and important political outcomes can be hard to quantify. Further, in the words of former Secretary-General Pérez de Cuellar, "no one will ever know how many conflicts have been prevented or limited through contacts which have taken place in the famous glass mansion, which can become fairly opaque when necessary".[16] Quiet diplomacy lives on in the oral tradition of the United Nations, of regional organizations or of a council of elders, but its intricacies are rarely committed to paper.

60. However, we know that, in an era of budgetary hardship and scrutiny from treasuries and voters alike, we must improve our ability to monitor outcomes, measure impact, present hard evidence that prevention works and communicate

[16] Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsbury, eds., *United Nations, Divided World: The UN's Roles in International Relations* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988).

success. The more we do, the more we learn what is effective and what is not. Within the Organization, we have made strides over the past few years in documenting engagements, analysing lessons and distilling promising practice.

F. Resources

61. Diplomacy is an intensely personal craft, and our most valuable resources are human. To be effective, mediators and envoys must possess credibility, an intangible quality which is hard to acquire and easy to lose. They must know how to earn trust and inspire confidence, working on the basis of discretion, impartiality, transparency and confidentiality. They must also be able to project the conviction that even the most intractable problem is solvable. These are not skills that are easily assessed. The "human factor" in diplomacy is the most uncertain, the hardest to plan for, and yet arguably the most pivotal in making any preventive diplomacy engagement work. The best tools and strategies are worth little without the right people to use them and to execute them.

62. Accordingly, the Organization has devoted considerable energy over the past few years to improving its rosters of senior envoys, mediators and experts who can be deployed to fragile situations around the globe. We count on our partnerships with Member States, regional actors and others to expand our mutual networks in this respect. The recently released independent report of the Senior Advisory Group on civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict (A/65/747-S/2011/85, annex) also makes a number of valuable recommendations for strengthening rosters and enhancing their interoperability. I have established a steering committee that will propose ways to operationalize these recommendations.

63. However, even the most experienced envoys cannot do it alone. At the United Nations, we are invested in building up a cadre of staff who can provide high-quality support and backstopping to senior envoys and eventually join their ranks. We are redoubling efforts to promote Headquarters-field mobility. Through our Mediation Support Unit and other capacities in the system, we are also working to improve the technical expertise we can offer our envoys on key thematic and practical concerns.

64. Preventive diplomacy is cost-effective but needs continued financial investment to deliver results. In 2010, the Security Council reaffirmed the need to provide the Organization with "predictable, coherent and timely financial support to optimize the use of preventive diplomacy tools".[17] Voluntary contributions remain essential to permit fast and flexible responses to crises and to peacemaking opportunities that arise. Their availability allows us to complement the stability and predictability of the regular budget with a genuine rapid response capability, and I encourage Member States to continue to provide this support.

[17] Statement of the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/2010/14), adopted during the Security Council open debate on "Maintenance of international peace and security: optimizing the use of preventive diplomacy tools: prospects and challenges in Africa", on 16 July 2010.

V. Observations and thoughts on the way forward

65. The Security Council requested that I submit a report making recommendations on how best to optimize the use of preventive diplomacy tools within the United Nations system and in cooperation with regional organizations and other actors. In this report, I have set out innovations and evolving practices of recent years, the tools at our disposal and the main challenges that we continue to face. There are a number of issues raised in this report which, if successfully addressed, would help to smooth the path ahead as we pursue our forward agenda.

66. We should build on the improvements that have been made in the United Nations and in various regional and subregional organizations in developing early warning mechanisms. The establishment of regular and informal early warning dialogues between the United Nations and regional and other partners would allow us to pool information and help us to anticipate "threshold moments" when key actors might decide to use violence. However, early warning is useful only if it leads to early action, and we need to consider a broader range of options for addressing an emerging threat, including seemingly small steps, such as multi-actor statements of concern or fact-finding missions, which can affect the calculations of parties on the ground early on.

67. We must also continue our efforts to invest in and better equip "preventive diplomats", who lead our efforts on the ground to avert violent conflict. We will need to expand our pool of highly skilled envoys and mediators who can be deployed rapidly to situations of concern, with a focus on increasing the number of senior female mediators.[18] Once deployed, they need to be able to easily and rapidly draw on top-notch thematic expertise, such as the in-high-demand services of the Standby Team of Mediation Experts. A longer-term priority for the United Nations, regional organizations and Member States is to invest in the training of staff to support senior envoys and mediators and eventually join their ranks.

68. Preventive diplomacy needs adequate financial investment to deliver results. In particular with regard to rapid response capabilities, I appeal to Member States to ensure predictable and timely financial support. At the same time, we will continue our work to maximize the impact of the resources we already have.

69. The United Nations has come a long way in developing partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, Member States and civil society in the area of conflict prevention. However, to live up to our full potential in this field, we need to further strengthen these relationships, in particular those with regional partners. We see scope for a more strategic dialogue on issues of potential concern, as well as a more regular exchange of views and information at the working level. In crisis situations, we need to be able to decide quickly on who can do what to help. The Security Council may wish to build on recent efforts and develop stronger relationships with regional organizations.

70. We also need to recognize that internationally led preventive diplomacy efforts might serve only to avert violence in the short term. Ultimately, only national mechanisms and institutions can sustainably prevent violent conflict in the long run. We will therefore continue to prioritize support to national capacities for mediation,

[18] See the report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities (S/2009/189, para. 62 (f)).

facilitation and dialogue, and to assist our counterparts at their request in building national systems for conflict prevention. We must also improve the way we work with civil society, especially women and young people, who can be key agents for peaceful change.

71. In conclusion, preventive diplomacy today is delivering concrete results, with relatively modest resources, in many regions of the world, helping to save lives and to protect development gains. It is an approach that may not be effective in all situations and will continue to face the uncertainty, risks and evolving challenges which, in a sense, come with the terrain. However, I firmly believe that better preventive diplomacy is not optional; it is necessary.

72. With increasing knowledge, stronger partnerships and better instruments, I am convinced that it is possible to further strengthen the international community's capacity for preventive diplomacy in the interest of peace, security and development. This has been an enduring idea at the United Nations, and one that manifestly has a future. Preventive diplomacy will remain a key priority for the Organization throughout my second term as Secretary-General, and I count on the support of Member States, regional organizations, civil society and other partners as we collectively take this work forward. It is, without doubt, one of the smartest investments we can make.